

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION**

**COMMITTEE:** Academic Affairs

**NO.:** AAC 15-35

**COMMITTEE DATE:** June 9, 2015

**BOARD DATE:** June 16, 2015

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**RENEWAL OF HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE MEMBERSHIP IN THE  
COMMONWEALTH HONORS PROGRAM**

**MOVED:** The Board of Higher Education accepts the report of the Commonwealth Honors Program Executive Committee and renews the membership of **Holyoke Community College** in the **Commonwealth Honors Program** for six years, effective June 16, 2015.

**Authority:** Commonwealth Honors Program Approval Process Guidelines as Revised by the Board of Higher Education in November 2006; G.L. c. 15A, § 9.

**Contact:** Angela Coletta, Assistant Director for Program Review & P-16 Collaborative Initiatives

## **BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**June 2015**

### **Holyoke Community College Renewal of Membership in Commonwealth Honors Program**

#### **BACKGROUND**

This motion concerns the continuation of Holyoke Community College's (HCC) membership in the Commonwealth Honors Program. According to the Commonwealth Honors Program Guidelines, once Commonwealth Honors Program approval has been obtained by an institution, the Program will be reviewed every six years by the Commonwealth Honors Executive Committee. The report of the Committee shall be forwarded to the Board of Higher Education for approval.

#### **REVIEW PROCESS**

Holyoke Community College prepared a self-study document presenting its Honors Program structure and operations in terms of the Commonwealth Honors Program requirements. The report provided evidence documenting fulfillment of the following criteria:

1. Alignment of the mission and goals of the Honors Program
2. Organization and administration
3. Admissions criteria
4. Transfer criteria
5. Program curriculum
6. Graduation criteria
7. Program resources
8. Approval procedures for new courses

#### **REVIEW TEAM FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

On February 4, 2015, a review team consisting of Susan J. Martelli, M.A., Massasoit Community College, Honors Program Coordinator; Melissa Woglom, M.A., Director of Student Programs, University of Massachusetts-Amherst; and Matthew Silliman, Ph.D., Professor of Philosophy, Director of Honors Program, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, conducted a day long assessment of the Holyoke Community College Honors Program. Prior to the on-campus visit, the team reviewed the self-evaluation prepared by the College.

The review team was impressed with the level of investment, dedication, and knowledge of the Honors Coordinator and the faculty, and the enthusiasm of the students and administration. While the review team did make some suggestions for improvement, it found that the honors program satisfies all of the above Commonwealth Honors Program. The review team recommends that HCC continue to be granted Commonwealth Honors Program status and recommends the re-approval of Holyoke Community College's Honors Program.

Recommendations from the Review Team included:

- The honors coordinator should receive a 2/3 course reassignment, rather than a 3/3 course load, to focus more of her efforts on communication to the college community at large about the honors program, to expand recruitment efforts and provide overall coordination of the Commonwealth Honors Program<sup>1</sup>.
- Streamline and broaden admissions to the Honors Program by reducing the number of required credits for admission.

## **INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE**

The institution provided satisfactory responses for all of the recommendations as follows:

- President William Messner indicated that the college will adjust the Honors Coordinator's course reassignment to reflect a 2/3 course load.
- The college will adjust admissions criteria by reducing the number of required credits for admission to the program from 24 to 12.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Department of Higher Education staff thoroughly reviewed all documentation received from the Commonwealth Honors Program Executive Committee and recommends that the Board approve the renewal of the membership of **Holyoke Community College** in the **Commonwealth Honors Program**.

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<sup>1</sup> Community college faculty teach a 5/5 course load; four year faculty teach a 4/4 course load. The recommendation of the CHP Executive Committee is that Honors Coordinators receive a 50% course reassignment; a 2/3 course load for community college faculty and 2/2 for state university and UMASS faculty coordinating the Honors Program.